

## 006 Protest Park

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I often find myself walking through this particular Downtown Los Angeles Park around noon where the sun directly hits. I know there is an official name for the park, but I can never remember it. Everyone I know just calls it “Protest Park”. It’s the middle of March where in Los Angeles the temperature is warm and then cools once the sun starts hiding behind the buildings. As I enter the park through the northwestern entrance, I have an overview of the space and admire at the purple Jacaranda petals that blanket the ground. I like to sit on the benches underneath the trees and let my mind escape into the sky.

People are walking through the paths, children are playing on the playground, and kids are kicking balls in the open space. Some of the players set up portable goals, as one of the kids kicks the ball, you can hear the swish of the net. One of the player’s sprains her ankle diving for a goal. A teammate walks her over to the medical kiosk and she is promptly handed an ice pack. Kind of reminds me of the lifeguard stations at the beach.

Wanting to be closer to nature, the spot that generally seems to be the most relaxed place to me is the embedded seating nooks in the green Buffer Zone. The air has a nice breeze going,

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chills up and down your body, but not enough to put a jacket on. The breeze sways the ornamental pink Muhlenbergia grasses and it makes me smile thinking they look like a sea of cotton candy.

Today will be my first time experiencing a live protest. My family, friends, and coworkers all asked me to make sure my phone was on so they can reach me or I can reach them. I look down at my phone to see if I have any messages and realize my phone is only at 2%. This doesn't make me feel very safe. A few feet in front of me is a woman speed walking. She has a sun visor hat and carrying a water bottle in her hands. I blend in and speed walk behind her as I'm heading towards the stub outs. The stub outs have plenty of charging stations for park goers like me. On Wednesdays Protest Park is one of the most popular farmers markets in the City of Los Angeles. I asked one of the vendors once why she thought this downtown farmer market thrived while others in the area struggled. She explained it was the stub out infrastructure that was provided for them in the park. When she reserves her space, she is given a key that unlocks the water, power, and hard-wired internet. She explains that she can wash her vegetables and hands on site and doesn't have to use a generator like at other locations. But most importantly to her is she can hard wire connect to the internet her point-of-sale purchases. This allows her fast and reliable transactions. But for me, all I need is to charge my phone right now and those USB outlets are always unlocked. So, I see an open spot, plug into my phone and watch as the day park goers start packing up to leave and people with political signs start to enter the space.

As the sun is setting, lights slowly begin to light up. I've seen the lights in this park a million times on Instagram, but I've never been here at night to experience them. It feels like a constellation is glowing right under my feet. I can't help it, I must take a selfie too, it's so

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beautiful! The light patterns always stay a warm color light and gently change patterns without any obnoxious flashing. It's oddly satisfying. Right now, the lights are directing me to the monuments. Apparently, this is a rotating exhibition of monuments throughout other parks in the world. As I walk up to the first monument, I'm excited that it's an actual James Turrell piece. Just as exciting on the other side of the park is a Ceasar Chavez monument I'm going to look at later. I love that both the pieces are not raised. The connection to the work is less pretentious when you can touch them. I feel like I'm marching right next to Ceasar Chavez.

The sun has completely set now and the same nurse that handed out the icepack to the soccer player is now handing out N95 face masks to those who need it. At the other kiosk I see the ACLU distributing literature about our civil rights. I think I'm going to walk over and grab one just in case. The lights have now shifted to the center circle of the park directing the crowd's attention to the organizers. I can see the organizers connecting to the infrastructure just as the vendors in the farmers market did. The difference is they are using the power to hard wire cameras to stream video and the reliable internet to mobilize. The chants are starting and the energy in the crowd is invigorating. So, I'm going to stop recording this narrative and join in.

Hello everyone! Welcome back to the Bravely Curious Podcast my name is Angela Garcia and I'm one of your hosts for today's episode. In our last episode, we had a particularly brave student who shared their first-person perspective of being a DACA recipient. We decided that *Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals* was an important topic to address. As a class we felt we could better educate ourselves on the topic, while informing others who may be completely unaware of the issues.

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Within this final episode of season one on the Bravely Curious Podcast, we will look back to our past episodes, where we have explored *theft, reclaiming and redefining, and the protecting of public and private spaces*. In our previous episodes and within the introduction to the series, we had stated that we wanted a “call to action” based upon everything that we had learned so far. So, for this episode, we have decided to take advantage of the design ideas and solutions to answer the question of “how we could implement them into an existing space”. Thus, our studio reached out to Mark Rios from RIOS and asked if we could redesign the space as an overlay design on the portion of Grand Park closest to City Hall. Since RIOS designed Grand Park, we assured him that our design in no way was a critique on the existing space, but rather a re-interpretation of what the space might look like according to our class. In true Mark Rios fashion, he thanked us for reaching out, noted the work we are exploring was important, and asked to see it once we complete our design and podcast. Thank you Mark!

Our site—an event lawn at Grand Park—is located between North Spring St and North Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles, next to the First and Broadway Park and the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center, across the street from City Hall. With such adjacencies to the park being powerful government agencies and infrastructure, we recognized the space to be a prime location for the public to amplify their voices within the heart of downtown Los Angeles. The event lawn at Grand Park already accommodates certain needs of the city and succeeds in its current function and use, however we are aiming to enhance the park to further accommodate protest and large gatherings. The existing park includes accessibility ramps, sloped walkways, a dog park, playground, and restrooms. Enhancing or retrofitting an existing park is no easy feat, especially when designing for protest. In an article entitled, “How Urban Design

Can Make or Break a Protest,” by Peter Schwartzstein, he writes “Los Angeles... is a disaster for protesters. It has no perfectly recognizable center, few walkable distances, and little in the way of protest-friendly space. As far as longtime city activists are concerned, just amassing small crowds can be an achievement.” With his precautions in mind, the Bravely Curious Podcast is here to redefine and amplify this space for the greater good, to help the voices of Los Angeles be heard.

In order to tackle problems on site, and incorporate the previous episodes design solutions, we aim to create a place that is both adaptable, flexible, and as an overall a protest positive space. Where people can gather to voice their opinions in front of Los Angeles’ bureaucratic buildings. The redesigned space also aims to provide temporary monuments in relation with current and future issues that are to be typically related to the main points of protest occurring at those times. When not being used for protest, the park will accommodate and benefit existing programs that are held at Grand Park while also addressing existing issues of the site. Some of these challenges are lack of shade, cohesiveness to its surroundings, and an overwhelming scale. In an article entitled “8 Ways We Can Improve the Design of Our Streets for Protest” by Gina Ford and Martin Zogran helped define these key concepts of our design. All of the principles in the article have proven to aid in our design process, but we feel that three of them best informed our main concerns:

First, the *‘There There’ principle*, which refers to a “culturally significant physical setting... Usually an iconic piece of architecture or monument associated with government—Los Angeles’ City Hall.” As a design team we knew this created a unique opportunity for our site as it is located along government buildings including Los Angeles City Hall.

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The second was the concept of ‘Mine, Yours, and Ours,’ which, “for designers... is a very interesting challenge—both for days of protest and for everyday use of our streets” (Ford and Zogran, 2017). The challenge is creating a space that is multi-purpose and constantly beneficial to the public. We want the park not only serve as a safe space for protest, but to also be catered for general daily use. A small-scale example that represents this idea is Parking Day, in which unused "... spaces could become temporary gardens, dining terraces, recreational nooks and sitting spaces as needed. These could be easily disassembled or made denser on march(ing) days.” This led us to the idea of a “protest positive” flexible space that would cater to the needs of those who occupy it.

Now ‘Throwing Shade,’ was the third concept we noted, where they mentioned, “the need for greater consideration of human comfort in the design of our streets. Marchers often struggled with a lack of a wide range of amenities—from drinking fountains, to public restrooms, and seating” (Ford and Zogran, 2017). This concept assisted in the creation of specifically assigned spaces to cater to those in the park. These three proposed design improvements served as the foundation of our site, Protest Park.

Now I would like to hand off the podcast to our second host Douglas as he will explain the reasoning for our design and vision through cultural considerations and justice for our local communities in the Downtown Los Angeles area.

Thanks Angela! So my name is Ignacio Moreno and as Jonathan was saying Im gonna be going in-depth with the some of the design decisions that were made.

Now Los Angeles is known for its rich culture and diverse communities that invite people from various backgrounds. Being in the heart of Los Angeles, this site will unify such cultures in

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a space that empowers and enables the voices of Angelenos to bring human equity. To support the voices of its' citizens, the site aims to be an active gathering space for protests in front of City Hall through the implementation of procession and programming. By balancing program with form, intimate and open spaces will fluctuate within the design, in which people can experience a variety of public and private events. These spaces will include community gardens, temporary art exhibits, WIFI service stations, educational kiosk, medical kiosk, playground, and dog park. Our goal is to create a unique space that will not only be able to accommodate protests, but will also act as a functional, yet beautiful location for the people of Los Angeles to gather.

In 2020, we saw many protests throughout the world that fought for racial justice, women's rights, LGBTQ lives, and environmental policy reform. Evaluating these relevant social movements has helped us understand what makes protest spaces successful and has offered us a starting point for our research. It is important for us to address previous protests that have occurred in Los Angeles to better understand how to design for our future. While looking at previous protests in Downtown Los Angeles, the Women's March took place in January 2020. Over 300,000 people marched and 60% of those marchers were first-time participants (Shalby, 2020). Knowing this, we wanted to make sure to have a welcoming environment for first-time protesters. Since protest gatherings invite large crowds, we wanted to make sure that safety was implemented into the park and that it works well for the people of Los Angeles and the people who utilize Grand Park.

With all of these things in mind, we started our design process with additional research around the topic of protest. One book that directly influenced our group was written by Tali Hatuka, an architect and academic at Tel Aviv University, who pointed out in her article, *The*

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*Design of Protest: Choreographing Political Demonstrations in Public Space*, “A speaker standing at the center of a circular space projects a message of being part of the crowd and emerging from it, as opposed to a speaker standing on a high podium at the edge of a rectangular space, evoking distinct hierarchy and theatricality (Hatuka, 2018). After brainstorming and sketching our ideas out, we decided to have the focal point of this park be at the center, allowing protests to take place in front of both City Hall and the Criminal Court House.

The next part in the design process was looking at the form of the site. Our big idea from the beginning was to have a designated main area as a place for protest. By using curved lines leading in towards the center we are inviting users into the center of the park. The positioning of the trees within the event space reinforces the direction of movement into the space, offer shade for those gathered within the center for protest, creating a sense of guidance and protection within the main event area. External pathways include benches and shade trees for the consideration of human comfort, such placement allows for moments of intimate spaces within the overall larger moves of the space.

Multi-purpose seating throughout the site can accommodate for rest, play, and still give some opportunity for elevation change on our flat site. Referring back to the article “8 Ways We Can Improve the Design of Our Streets for Protest,” flat surfaces can serve a variety of purposes during events or regular pedestrian use. The form of the seating also portrays a sense of movement in the site and can serve as a monument through the symbolism of people rising and voicing their opinions. For example, quotes would be engraved onto each bench for emphasized significance.



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Another aspect we wanted to focus on was deliberate color use throughout the site. Since the park is used for protests, we wanted to stray from anything that could negatively affect emotions. This meant staying away from bright red or a cold blue, so we created a specific color palette. Since the colors you observe play a significant part in your thoughts and behaviors, we took this advantage for color to aid as behavioral health treatment. The colors we are using for the concrete of the site were chosen from the Davis concrete color palette and include Cliffside Brown, Outback, and Miami Buff. These colors are subtle but manage to provoke a calming, peaceful, and inviting ambiance throughout the site. They refrain from evoking high temper energy, rather, induce a sense of tranquility. In the design, the color Outback which is a (greyish brown) is used in the circulation for the paths. It is made to separate the sections of the design. The color Cliffside Brown is a (tannish brown) and is located at the green buffer which is in both the green buffer on the left and the event space towards the center. Both colors are complementary and display an earthy and neutral tone. The final color is Miami Buff and is a (tannish green) to be used as an accent color amidst the others. The assembled colors establish an atmosphere that is peaceful, welcoming, and warm. The placement of these colors will help showcase specific areas and provide a subtle feeling of safety for the visitors of Protest Park.

Additional color in the park is seen with our high-grade colored plexiglass that imitates a stained-glass look (without the liability of actual glass in a public space), which brightens the space in the daytime that casts vibrant light patterns on the floor. The playfulness of the reflected stained glass moves on the ground according to the movement of the sun, contributing to the ambience of the space, as well as aesthetics.

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Lighting the space was a key component to the success of the space. We began by embedding flush mounted LED lights two foot on center throughout all of the hardscape on site. It's important to note that we specified the lights to be fixed at the 2700 Kelvin temperature and programmed the master controller to not allow for flashing or strobe like settings. We believe that it is these parameters in the lighting plan that will ensure massive grid of lights will maintain a sense of peace and beauty that when experienced on the ground or from above might conjure up the sense that you are embedded within a constellation. The programming that we are allowing the lights to do are creating a smooth and gradual wayfinding experience. For example, we might create a gradual light movement to focus on the center platform deck where an important speaker might be addressing the crowd.

Aside from wayfinding, the embedded lights can serve as a stand-alone performance art piece. Our lights can be thought of as a reinterpretation of the iconic Urban Light exhibition by Chris Burden that sits in front of the LACMA. The programming of the lights themselves can be done by various artists. We decided to propose a couple of examples of programmable art installations to get us started. The first exhibition consists of various squares at a 45-degree angle converging at numerous points. The second lighting pattern will incorporate the monuments on both sides of the park. This lighting pattern will act as a hall of lights that will connect the two monuments helping activate the focal points of the site. Users will be able to be within the hall of lights versus being on the outside allowing users to be part of the monument installation. Finally, the third lighting installation consists of a sequential series that starts at the very center of the park and spreads out. Similar to a rock being thrown in a lake and creating a ripple. The shape for this sequential series is very similar to that of the first lighting pattern, except for arrows

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being on each of the corners. As the sequential series begins in the center and disperses out, it creates a series of movement and directionality. If you are in the center the lighting will act as directional arrows, indicating users to move toward the outer portion of the park. Users on the outer portion of the park will see the lights being dispersed and create a sense of curiosity allowing users to move toward the center.

Our intentions for the use of these lighting options will not only help people feel physically safer but mentally safe, as well. In Los Angeles, The Department of Mental Health stated the city “accounted for 18.5% of the county’s PTSD cases, the largest proportion between service areas,” and “21.6% of depressed individuals” (County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, 2018). We realized that a design element that could help the members of the community who are affected is through lighting. ‘Light therapy’ is frequently used to help treat depression and affective disorders (Vandewalle 2010). People will acclimate to the atmosphere of the space through ambient light, at 2700 kelvin, which produces a warm lighting that regulates “ongoing cognitive brain function, including attention, working memory, updating, and sensory processing, within a few tens of seconds” (Vanderwalle 2010). This lighting plan would work for anyone who passed by, from those hanging out in the park during a festival, to those who work nearby.

After looking into the different ways, the park’s elements could help both mental and physical health, we wanted to investigate direct ways it would help those who occupy the space. We found through the US Census that “10.8% of people in Los Angeles do not have health insurance” (US Census, 2018). We later found through PBS’s *Healthcare Crisis* that, “nearly one-third of Americans face each day without the security of knowing..., if and when they need

it... [to be] available to them and their families. Having no health insurance also often means that people will postpone necessary care and forego preventive care” (PBS, 2000). We understand the situation, so we wanted to create a space that allows people to get medical attention. For example, an unstaffed electrical medical kiosk can run basic tests for people such as blood pressure, heart rate and ECG, as well as height, weight, and BMI. The kiosk would not be able to diagnose anybody, but it would act as a free tool to help people in need some need of proper medical care. The same space would also change as needed, so we can have medical workshops with trained professionals, offer free flu shots during flu season, a walk-up testing site for Covid-19. And the space could also act as a designated area for first responders during social events.

An important factor of the site was having accessibility for anyone who uses the space. To help with this, we created infrastructure stub outs. This adds additional seating that provide communal, yet private spaces, as well as bringing attention to nature with the centered trees. These areas have built in amenities that everyone can use. For everyday use these stub outs include seating and tables with charging stations, along with water bottle filling stations. In the case of a protest these areas can be used as a meeting space and provide water for those marching. These stub outs also have connections for WIFI that anyone on site can use. These provide an uninterrupted secure internet connection that has the option for plug-in WIFI for a steady flow. The park will also use the WIFI for its connections, including a real time sign in with the medical kiosk and e-commerce payments for events and farmer’s markets.

Throughout the semester, our guest lecturers offered an insight to their perspectives. These included: North Carolina State University professor and FASLA member Kofi Boone;

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Jonathan Geels, the principle landscape architect Troyer Group; Maci Nelson, host of her podcast 'The Landscape Nerd' and the host of our introduction episode; Gina Ford, who co-wrote "8 Ways We Can Improve the Design of Our Streets for Protest" which inspired our design concepts; Billy Fleming, director of the Ian McHarg center and lead author of "The 2100 Project: An Atlas for the Green New Deal"; and Matt Sickle, the Principle Landscape Architect at Michael Vergason Landscape Architects. They have each helped us with their great insights into what the park could become. Matt Sickle and his blog about monuments tying their meaning to landscape architecture was of particular interest when addressing the idea of a space being "Monumental" in nature.

I'm gonna end my portion here and pass it back to Jonathan to wrap everything, but I would like to thank you guys for listening to my portion.

Thank you Douglas I will do my best. Hello guys nice to have you back, lets continue where we left off.

We discussed how monuments are focal points to an area, so we need to be careful with what we convey. He said that sometimes monuments are just for the moment, they can bring attention to a topic but can change with time. It also invites the community to gather and collaborate with one another within the park and give local artists an allotted time so their voices can be heard. Temporal monuments would elevate the significance of the space as they alternate relative to current events, holidays, and other organized programming. Commissioned artists would present the importance of each topic and event by materializing the people's voices. By including these temporal monuments, they accommodate the ever-changing social matters.

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Since our site is incredibly open, we wanted to create a more intimate space within the design. One way this could be achieved is through a green buffer. This would create green areas accessible to everyone who enters the park. And as our design progressed, we thought about building a community healing garden. We decided to take into consideration our three gardens to create an immersive experience and connection to everyone's senses. According to the National Garden Bureau, “a healing garden can take many forms but always provides interaction with nature... The rich aroma of fresh earth and the delightful scent of perfumed herbs fill the air we breathe, while the fresh flavor of a crispy pea pod or sweet berry tempts our taste buds” (National Garden Bureau, 2020). We chose plants that work well within Los Angeles, but also represents the people and area.

Once we were done with the design of the park, we had one last, but still equally important, task. We asked ourselves, who are we designing for and how we can better serve them? To do this we looked at statistics on the demographics throughout the area. According to the U.S Census, there is an estimated amount of 3.9 million people living in the city of Los Angeles as of 2019. The County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health states that, “the majority of the population in Metro area of Los Angeles is Latino at 54%, followed by Western European Whites at 17%, Asians at 16%, and African-Americans at 5%” (County of Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, 2018). Since none of these groups are monolithic, we wanted to have a variety of diverse cultural events. For example, the most common Asian languages in downtown Los Angeles are Korean and Tagalog. So, to represent the community, we wanted events such as Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving Day) and Philippine Republic Day, also known as Filipino Independence Day.

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We also wanted to add social events and recreation. Adding to the present access to our park's community garden and citrus grove available to the public, we included programming for a farmer's market where members could sell community-grown food, and possibly have a small shop where people can buy lunch. Taking advantage of the park's location in-between civic government buildings, the event lawn would include pop-up areas where visitors can get receive information on obtaining a lawyer, registering to vote, or even allow national and community organizations to hand out information. When such events and programming is not present, we wanted to have area open for recreation.

After listening to all the episodes: The Introduction, Landscape's Original Sin, Reclaiming and Redefining, Protecting, and DACA, we have realized that we can make a difference and redefine the meaning of the spaces we use to protect our values as a community. In the Landscape's original sin podcast, we talked about the problem of the theft of land and how it has affected the people that would inhabit it. With this space, we have implemented a design to help address the areas that have been affected by this and hope to have created a space that works for the public. We have redefined the use of our site to analyze the communal values of the city of Los Angeles and to amplify those values next to important government hubs, such as City Hall and the Criminal Courthouse. As a studio, we felt that there is a lack of dedicated to spatial features that aid in keeping city leaders accountable when necessary. City leaders are in the position to benefit their communities and create a space that actively encourages the public to have a line of communication with the city of Los Angeles as this is fundamental for change. As current and future Landscape architects we can design our environments that prevent such occurrences and benefit society, and we should make use of these opportunities. Landscape

architecture as a profession can help aid this world and, in this way, save it; as a profession we are hugely under-appreciated and I hope we change this in the future through our work and through our listeners.

Thank you so much for listening to our past episodes and if you are a new listener, you can follow along at [www.thebravelycuriouspodcast.com](http://www.thebravelycuriouspodcast.com) or you can simply subscribe through your favorite apps including iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Podcasts, and Google Play. Thanks for listening!

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